

Wine Library Associates  
of  
Sonoma County  
Oral History Series

Leonard & Chris Fredson  
Fredson Winery &  
Geyserville History

Leonard Fredson Interviewed by  
Joseph Vercelli


Chris Fredson Interviewed by  
William Heintz

SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY



1000 06 435867 0 8





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
County of Sonoma

<http://archive.org/details/leonardchrisfred00unse>

FREDSON, LEONARD.  
LEONARD AND CHRIS FREDSON  
: FREDSON WINERY AND  
1996.

10000643586708  
CENT









## **Leonard & Chris Fredson**

**Fredson Winery & Geyserville History**

**Leonard Fredson Interviewed by  
Joseph Vercelli — April 24, 1982**

**Chris Fredson Interviewed by  
William Heintz — October 31, 1973**

**Transcription by  
Gail Ryan WLASC  
1995-1996**





All literary rights in this manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to the Wine Library of Sonoma County. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without written permission from the Sonoma County Wine Library, Center and Piper Streets, Healdsburg, California, 95448.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Library and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user.



## Introduction

The following two interviews are of the Fredson family, long in Sonoma County they have had as long a history in the wine and grape growing industry. The family patriarch, Israel Fredson (an American version of a Swedish name), came to California from a sailing life, and after settling the property north of Windsor, set off to the gold country in search of a fortune. The first interview with Joe Vercelli is of Leonard Fredson, grandson of Israel, they discuss the history of the Fredson wineries — both in Windsor and Geyserville, the family, and the grape industry in general. The second interview is by William Heintz with Christian Fredson, son of Israel. They center on the Geyserville location of the Fredson winery and close neighbors from "Newt" Wisecarver to Heart's Desire's Andrew Bouton.





**Len (Leonard) Fredson**  
*Fredson Winery*

Interviewed by Joseph Vercelli  
with G. M. (Puch) Pucilowski

Saturday morning, April 24, 1982

Transcription by Gail Ryan, Healdsburg      March 1994

---

The interview is taking place in Joe Vercelli's home on Solar Way, Healdsburg.

Joseph Vercelli: I am sitting in my dining room with Len Fredson. First, let me say that Len is an "Old-Timer", he surprised me with his age (67) this morning. I didn't know that he was my contemporary, I always thought that he was some years my junior. Normally I don't make that mistake in guessing ages, but Len and his brother Don are extremely well preserved.

Len will you tell us a little bit about your grandfather? As I understand it you are the third generation in the wine business. Your grandfather was in it, then your dad, and then now you and Don, that's your third generation.

Len Fredson: Right.

Vercelli: Where did your grandfather migrate?

Fredson: I don't know what part of the old country he came from, he came from Sweden originally, he shipped out as a cabin boy, I think, at 14. He worked the Merchant Marines there for many years and came to San Francisco. He loved it. Then he decided to try to go to the gold mines to make some money.

Vercelli: Do you have any idea as to time that was?

Fredson: In the 1870's, the early 1870's. I have his papers here. He worked up there off and on quite awhile until he made enough money to come down here and bought the ranch. It was just bare land at the time.

Vercelli: Which ranch was that? Where was it located?

Fredson: You know where the under crossing [train bridge] is? [Old Redwood Hwy. 5 miles south of Healdsburg/3 miles north of Windsor] It was on the left, it was all that land on the left, going south.

Vercelli: Stacy Belli's relative married a deputy sheriff when I first moved to town [Healdsburg] in 1936, and it is just that locale that you are referring to.



Fredson: He called it Windsor. That's what it was. They didn't have a Healdsburg address, it was Windsor. If you go down, you will see a high two story house right on the left. That was his house.

Vercelli: That house is still there.

Fredson: He built that house in 1905. Of course, the winery is disintegrated now.

Vercelli: The winery was built on that piece of land, do you have any idea as to the size of the land?

Fredson: It must have been about 50-60 acres.

Vercelli: What was his name?

Fredson: Israel.

Vercelli: What was his family, how many children? He was your father's dad.

Fredson: Yes. The only one that I know, there was an aunt. I think that he [Israel] had one sister.

Vercelli: She would be your—

Fredson: Great Aunt.

Vercelli: Did he marry in this country?

Fredson: Yes, he married here in Healdsburg.

Vercelli: How many children did he have?

Fredson: Three.

Vercelli: Who were they?

Fredson: Two boys and one girl.

Vercelli: There was Chris—

Fredson: Chris was the youngest.

Vercelli: Is "Chris" for Christian or Christopher?

Fredson: Christian.

Vercelli: When you said you were Swedish—if it had been Italian it would have been Cristoffo.

Fredson: There was a Hilda and a Charles. The oldest one was Hilda, then come Charles, and then come Chris.

Vercelli: When did they pass away.





- Fredson: Hilda was in '64 and Jack [Charles], they called him Jack, was in '46.
- Vercelli: That was quite a few years [ago] that he passed away. Whereas Hilda passed away relatively recently, in our time.
- Do you know anything about the winery? Its size, its capacity?
- Fredson: I remember that they said it was 150,000 (gallons). But in those days that was considered a pretty good size.
- Vercelli: Do you have any idea as to the variety of grape?
- Fredson: He made zinfandel, he made white wine, all the local grapes they could buy around here at that time. He made some riesling.
- Vercelli: How large was his grape holdings?
- Fredson: It was just that 50 acres. It wasn't much of a vineyard, he relied mostly on buying.
- Pucilowski: What was the name of that winery?
- Fredson gets a document and Joe reads from it.
- Vercelli: Cypress Hill. (Name of Israel Fredson's winery)
- Pucilowski: Nice logo too, I like that.
- Fredson: That's a piece of his letterhead.
- Vercelli: I'm looking at an envelope with a return address on [it]. "If not delivered in ten days return to Israel Fredson, Cypress Hill Vineyards and Winery, Windsor, Sonoma County, California."
- They were promoting Sonoma County in those days and today we want to promote Alexander Valley, Dry Creek—Isn't it horrible?
- Fredson: Sure.
- Vercelli: Can I look at the naturalization papers?
- Fredson: See this really isn't his name, he had such a long name, they changed it [to Fredson] to control it, they said nobody could understand that. He changed it at that time.
- Look at that writing, how they used to write.
- Vercelli: The County Court of Sierra County. [One of the gold mining counties.] He was naturalized in 1878. He was a foreigner that became an American citizen right after [he came to this county].
- Fredson: He probably worked for a few years, he had to spend some time here.



Pucilowski: This is the stuff for museums.

Vercelli: Yes, I should say.

[to Pucilowski] Can you make out the County Clerk's name? The Judge is up here, the Judge is Howell.

Pucilowski: Waugh.

Vercelli: That certainly is interesting.

Pucilowski: To have the papers is even more unique. [Brief discussion of clarity of the seal].

Vercelli: He was undoubtedly gold mining up there?

Fredson: He worked for Sierra Buttes Mine. He never tried it on his own. He worked as a miner.

Vercelli: So basically if he built the house in 1905—

Fredson: That's long after he had the winery.

Vercelli: He was here for a period of time before he built the house.

Fredson: I have some pictures in here of the old house you can see.

Vercelli: You have no idea as to when he came [here]? The origin of the winery. That's why I would like to see land transfers.

Fredson: It had to have been the early 70's.

Vercelli: But he was naturalized in Sierra County '78.

Fredson: He had the land here, but somehow he couldn't get naturalized [here].

Vercelli: He had the land here although he was a resident of Sierra County. That's interesting.

How long did the winery operate?

Fredson: Until 1920.

Vercelli: Right up to Prohibition.

Fredson: Then he said, "Can't make wine anymore, sell everything." And he went to Oakland.

Vercelli: Do you know who he sold to?

Fredson: The Nelson Brothers.

Vercelli: I don't know them.





Fredson: One of them is still around.

Vercelli: They are still in the community?

Fredson: Yes.

Vercelli: When did your father become actively engaged with the winery? Being that he was reared there [he probably started early].

Fredson: He lived there. He was always in it.

Vercelli: Now, when they sold the winery, what happened to your dad?

Fredson: They already had a winery in 1911 up here. [Located south of Nervo Winery (named changed to Canyon Road Winery mid-1990's), south of Geyserville. The property was divided by Caltrans with the placement of Highway 101.]

Vercelli: Oh, your dad left his father and opened up this winery on the property you currently have today.

Fredson: It was still grandpa's up there, he had two wineries really.

Vercelli: Israel had two wineries. He had one at Windsor and one in Geyserville.

Pucilowski: What was the one in Geyserville named?

Fredson: I can't think of a name, it just went by Fredson.

Vercelli: It didn't have a trade name like Cypress Hills?

Fredson: No.

Vercelli: When did he acquire that?

Fredson: 1911. They bought it in 1911 and they tore down an old rat-trap winery there and built that good sized one.

Vercelli: There was a winery prior?

Fredson: Harry Pitts had a winery.

Vercelli: Harry Pitts the nursery man?

Fredson: Yes.

Vercelli: His father, or was it Harry?

Fredson: Harry was the father.

Vercelli: He passed away here not too long ago.

Fredson: George is the one that just died lately.



Vercelli: Yes, he had the property in Alexander Valley, and then he had those apartments where the *Tribune* is. (800 block on Healdsburg Ave, Healdsburg)

Fredson: They built that whole winery all in one season.

Vercelli: But Harry Pitts had that winery?

Fredson: He had the whole ranch, that's who they bought the ranch from.

Vercelli: He was a neighbor of Wisecarver's, is that right?

Fredson: There were one or two ranches in-between.

Pucilowski: How big was the Harry Pitts winery? Do you know anything about it?

Fredson: I think that dad said it was about 20,000 gallons.

Pucilowski: How old — when was the one established?

Fredson: I wouldn't know.

Pucilowski: Now when your dad got the property, how big was the one they built in 1911?

Vercelli: 150-160,000 [gallon capacity].

Pucilowski. That's the one that was 150,000.

Fredson: This one down here was too.

Pucilowski: Oh, they both were a hundred and fifty.

Vercelli: Where did your dad market his wines in 1911?

Fredson: Commission merchants, everybody went commission merchants, grandpa too.

Pucilowski: How did the commission market work?

Fredson: You'd take your samples to these people, Lanceburger was one of them, Gundlach and Bundschu. You would take the samples there for sale and they would find a buyer, and they would take a commission.

Pucilowski: I see, would you stick a sample in a bottle?

Fredson: You would take a bottle and they knew where the buyers were.

Pucilowski: All over the United States?

Fredson: All over, some would go to New York, some, most to San Francisco.

Vercelli: Restaurants, hotels.





- Pucilowski: Did you ever know where it was going to afterwards?
- Fredson: Oh you knew, you had to deliver it out.
- Pucilowski: Oh, then they came back to you and you shipped it directly to the restaurant in Chicago or wherever it was.
- Fredson: Yes. It went in tank cars in puncheons.
- Vercelli: Big volume.
- I've read of the name Lanceburger. They were in San Francisco, I believe. Gundlach-Bundschu, they were over in Rhinefarm in Sonoma.
- Fredson: They sold wine there.
- Vercelli: What type of wine, Len, did Dad make, can you remember? Was it always red?
- Fredson: He made all red.
- Vercelli: Can you remember any of the grape varieties that they mentioned?
- Fredson: Zinfandel, carignane, petite sirah, they had some grenache and of course they always had some – a few alicante in those days, mataro, you don't hear of those anymore. It wasn't much.
- Vercelli: Mataro, it wasn't a premium [grape], it wasn't a flavor [grape]. It was a big berried grape, a good producer.
- Fredson: It was a distant cousin of the carignane.
- Vercelli: Yes, large, round berry. I don't know of anyone that has anything today. There's a little bit grown in the San Joaquin Valley, but not very much.
- And Dad continued on, I think that you told me, during Prohibition?
- Fredson: He didn't make any wine after '20, but he kept it in bond in there.
- Vercelli: Do you have any records? Frank DeGeorge did the same thing as you. Frank DeGeorge made wine and in 1926-27 he had a copy of a 702 record and I took a picture of that. Do you have any such records?
- Fredson: We made wine in '33, that was before it was Repealed.
- Vercelli: You didn't make any in '28? Because in '28 when Al Smith was running for Presidency, he promised to Repeal the Prohibition Amendment, and many [wineries] made wine in '28. The Italian Swiss was loaded, they made grape juice hoping to convert it into wine. When I went up there in 1933, they had five year old grape juice that was the color of Rosé. It was red grape juice that had been heated to extract the color. And it had been treated with 750 parts per million of



SO<sub>2</sub>, 750 parts! It was a sulfur solution. But in spite of that sulfur solution, the damn thing fermented. It had a slow fermentation, it had about one and a half, two percent alcohol. It was refrigerated. It was down in that component of the cellar where they had huge pieces of refrigerating equipment.

Getting back to 1928, well, they gambled on that [Al Smith's election] and they had to wait five years.

Where did you finally dispose of your wine in '33?

Fredson: Gallo.

Vercelli: Gallo had opened?

Fredson: We sold it to him in 1934.

Vercelli: I didn't think that they started [in 1933].

Fredson: No, we were about one of the first ones they ever sold to. [bought from]

All they had was a Dodge agency and a few tanks down in Modesto.

Vercelli: And they had a packing shed.

Fredson: Yes.

Vercelli: I never saw the packing shed, I'm just quoting Earl Petersen. Earl had been very close to the Gallos and he told me that they basically started in '34.

Fredson: That's when we sold them the wine.

Pucilowski: Did you retain ties with them throughout your—did you continue to sell to them?

Fredson: We stayed with them for about ten years, off and on.

Pucilowski: How come you parted?

Fredson: Well, they went in pretty deep over there at Frei's. Then we got in with Petri about that time.

Vercelli: Let's go back to '33.

You sold to Gallo for a period of time. You mentioned you got into marketing with Petri. But was that after Northern Sonoma [Wine], or was it before Northern Sonoma?

Fredson: Right before.

Vercelli: Then from Petri you started to market with Northern Sonoma.





What do you remember of Northern Sonoma? The reason I'm asking this is that Bob [Meyer] told me a little bit and he let me have some copies of [meeting] minutes for Northern Sonoma.

Fredson: It was a partnership. It was us, Geyserville Growers, Walter Sink and the Frei brothers. I don't think [Bill] Furber was.

Vercelli: Furber was pretty small.

Do you have a rough idea as to the year that took place?

Fredson: I think that it was '37.

Vercelli: That was before the Prorate.

Fredson: [Looking through documents] That was the first place I ever worked.

Vercelli: Northern Sonoma?

Fredson: Yes. I was the winemaker.

Vercelli: You were their first winemaker?

Fredson: Yes.

Vercelli: That's very interesting.

Fredson: Here it is, 1938.

Vercelli: [Reading from document] In November the 3rd, 1938, you were employed by Northern Sonoma.

Fredson: We started it in '37, but they didn't come out with it until 1938.

Vercelli: The partnership?

Fredson: We all took our wine in there and I had charge of finishing it. Then we would market it.

Vercelli: Who was selling for you, do you remember?

Fredson: Renault took most of the wine.

Vercelli: In Egg Harbor. D'Augustino.

Fredson: That was Renault and Company, I shipped tank car after tank car to him.

Vercelli: Egg Harbor, New Jersey. I never realized that till this day. Incidentally the company is no longer in business.

Fredson: No. I know that.



Vercelli: Did you have a broker at that time?

Fredson: No, Meyer took care of that most of that and would find brokers and buyers. That was their side of it.

Vercelli: That was Harry or Bob?

Fredson: Harry. [Harry Meyer was the father.]

Vercelli: Of course, Bob was in the service, Bob didn't come into the picture until—

Fredson: Bob was then working for [Rosenberg's] the dried fruit processor.

Vercelli: Rosenberg's, and then he went into the service, he didn't become active (in the wine business) —

Fredson: Till '46.

Vercelli: Yes.

How long did Northern Sonoma operate as such?

Fredson: 1950, I guess.

Vercelli: Later than that, because they had the bottling operation.

Fredson: Well, we had the bottling operation.

Vercelli: Yes, you had the bottling operation while you were there. Then they sold to Petri.

Fredson: Yep, I'm sure it was '50.

Vercelli: Who relieved you? How did Stacy [Belli] move into Northern Sonoma?

Fredson: He was there working.

Vercelli: That's right, when Healdsburg Wine sold out, then he went to Northern Sonoma.

Fredson: He went to Asti really.

Vercelli: Yes, because at that time Northern Sonoma sold out to the Petris.

Fredson: The guy that took my place in the winery was Harvey Rose.

Vercelli: I remember Harvey, is he still alive?

Fredson: Yes, he's kind of blind, but he gets around.

Vercelli: How old is Harvey?



- Fredson: He's about three or four years older than I am.
- Vercelli: The reason that I asked was I thought that he was our contemporary, but I didn't know [for sure].
- Fredson: We bought that plant from Sunsweet. (In Geyserville)
- Vercelli: That was a Sunsweet—
- Fredson: —prune packing house.
- Vercelli: And dehydrating?
- Fredson: No dehydrating. At that time the Prune Association had these packing plants all over the district to pack the prunes to get them to market.
- Vercelli: But they did not dehydrate here?
- Fredson: No. In those days, there wasn't much dehydration, it was all sun-dried.
- Vercelli: Sun-dried, yes.
- Fredson: So we striped everything out of the inside (of the building) to start off with. Then we remodeled the building, it was first rate. We put in new floors in there, all nice drains, a 100,000 gallon refrigeration room.
- Vercelli: I remember the room. The tanks finally came to Asti. The tanks were in good shape, they were all new tanks.
- Fredson: I seasoned them, you know that's what we called it, took the redwood stain off.
- Vercelli: Do you remember from whom they were purchased? Was it Windler?
- Fredson: Pacific Tank, I think.
- Vercelli: You had three people [that sold tanks] you had Windler in San Francisco, you had Pacific Tank, which I think was up by Eureka, and you had the Hammond Lumber Company. The Hammond Lumber Company ran into some difficulties.
- Fredson: We bought tanks from them [Hammond Lumber Company] and we had some difficulties in the old winery.
- Vercelli: The quality of the wood?
- Fredson: No, the quality of the wood was all right, but you know how staves are made, they didn't shave them with a plane, they sawed them. And they were rough, and the wine would seep through. They said, "That's the way we make water tanks." Well, that didn't work. They had to come take them apart the next year and resurface them and put them back up on their own.





- Vercelli: Those are the interesting stories, the human element.
- During Prohibition did you have any interesting experiences? Frank Nervo was telling us how he mentioned other people that were doing it, but it was probably Frank — how they that put the rocks in the tanks. [Chuckles]
- Fredson: I've heard of that.
- Vercelli: They would take the wine out of the tanks and put (in) the rocks to increase the volume. And he also told us that they would tack a ten or fifteen gallon barrel to the top—the roof of the tank, right over the bung hole. So they would fill that full of wine. You'd take the thief and go down and sample the thing, but you only had ten or fifteen gallons of wine.
- Fredson: That worked fine until the Feds got a long stick and poked it down.
- [Laughter] You could get by selling some wine. You could sell your shrinkage. They couldn't catch that. I was a little kid, but I saw a few loads go out at night.
- Pucilowski: At your winery? I'll be darn.
- Vercelli: When you look back in retrospect you had every reason [to sell wine]. The law wasn't a valid law, it just took so long to be repealed. You can't consider them lawbreakers, practically everyone did it. It was very, very common. A few of them, like Stacy [Belli] was telling me, he didn't want to go on tape on it, but he said that he used to make grappa. I remember when I was at Scatena's, one day someone came in the tank house and Bill Mazzoni went over and he had the grappa. This was 1936-37, so he bootlegged up until the last minute. When I found out I was afraid, so I went to Dr. Scatena and I said I wanted to resign. And he said, "What for?" "Well, Bill is bootlegging and I didn't want to be any part of that, I don't want to go to jail." I think that was the last there.
- Fredson: That's dangerous then. You could get by with it during Prohibition.
- Vercelli: Yes. Have you seen recently in the *Press Democrat*, Gaye LeBaron wrote and she mentioned all the people. Even Nin Guidotti who was a Justice of the Peace, he helped them kind of circumvent the law. But I'm sure John Ellis didn't. [Local law enforcement.]
- Fredson: No, he didn't bother anybody about it.
- We did make some wine in '31, and we kept it right over [until Repeal]. And then when we made the wine in '33 we run it through the pomace again.
- Vercelli: Was the wine that you had made prior to '31 sound?
- Fredson: I was still sound had it's old taste, it never got spoiled.



- Vercelli: It didn't spoil. You're a good winemaker.
- Fredson: We had the samples up to (Enrico) Prati several times and he said it was fine. He didn't want to buy it at that time, they had so much of their own.
- Vercelli: Yes, I was going to say, they had so much of their own. They weren't able to judge the market, everyone wanted sweet wine. And we were all loaded with dry wine, and the market couldn't absorb all the dry wine.
- Fredson: Although he did buy all my uncle's wine over here, Peter Holtz. (Holtz Winery on Brack Road, West Dry Creek), Because he wouldn't quit making wine when Prohibition came. He said, "They can't do that to me." And he kept using his grapes until finally he had the whole winery full.
- Prati bought it and distilled it.
- Pucilowski: And he never sold any?
- Fredson: You couldn't sell it.
- Vercelli: And Prati finally bought his wine?
- Fredson: Yes, way late. He distilled it.
- Vercelli: That's what happened to Simi. Simi had a large volume. I was there at Asti and I figured out the projected yield, the anticipated yield with an ebullioscope and the wine had congeners or components that affected the boiling point. And so we turned up with a tremendous shortage. We expected to get so much proof gallons and we didn't. So we had an investigation, Uncle Sam came up with half a dozen inspectors and they shut us down. And they went through, then when they found out, they checked out the distillate and some of these substances were volatile, they came over. Like the volatile acidity, the wine had putrefied and it didn't get to there [the correct amount of distillate]. They determined it by distillation, whereas I had used an ebullioscope, they used a hydrometer to determine specific gravity. When they realized that the base material that we used [was putrefied], they didn't penalize us.
- Fredson: It was probably real high in volatile acids.
- Vercelli: Oh, yes. It was probably practically vinegar. I remember we treated some with calcium carbonate and we treated some with sodium hydroxide, yes, to neutralize [the acid]. It still come over, even the distillate.
- Fredson: It was still in the taste. If there was a little prick in wine, you could get rid of it, put it [calcium carbonate] in there, it would knock the sour out of it, but it wouldn't change the analysis.
- Vercelli: Very true.



When was the partnership dissolved, Northern Sonoma?

Fredson: In the early forties. See we, that wasn't selling much wine, it didn't go too good.

Vercelli: I realize that. But you were also bottling.

Fredson: Yes, we were bottling. Dad decided he would go back to Petri. From then on we were with them.

Vercelli: And Walter Sink went to Italian Swiss. And Frei, I guess, they were independent for a short period and then they went to Gallo.

Fredson: But they never really did take all their wine up there. They just took a certain amount.

Vercelli: Who's that, Gallo?

Fredson: Yes, we didn't take the whole load up there either, a few tanks just to keep the place going. Then we started selling to Arakalian.

Vercelli: Do you know who represented Arakalian? Was it a fellow by the name of Howard?

Fredson: Yes. [Laughter]

Vercelli: What are you laughing at?

Fredson: Well — he was quite a guy.

Vercelli: I did a lot of business with Howard I made money with him. He was a broker.

Pucilowski: Is that all you are going to tell me about it?

Fredson: [Laughing] We have different stories, I tell you about. I can't really...  
Then we had Tarpy for an agent for a long time.

Vercelli: Oh yes, that was before Sales came into the picture. Tarpy was Sales' uncle, Paul Tarpy.

When did you hook up with the Krugs?

Fredson: About 1950.

Vercelli: You've been doing business with them for thirty years. Isn't that wonderful!

Fredson: There's never been a paper signed.

Vercelli: That's important, never a paper signed, a commitment that has existed for thirty years.





Pucilowski: You still do?

Fredson: Yes.

Pucilowski: What do you grow for them or make?

Fredson: Zinfandel, burgundy, chablis.

Vercelli: What whites [grapes] are you using for your chablis?

Fredson: Sauvignon and colombard.

Vercelli: Sauvignon — vert or blanc?

Fredson: Vert. Then you know growers always have colombard on top, but then you get down into the lower [areas] and you get into the golden chasselas.

{Laughter} Then some burgers go into it.

Pucilowski: Mixed plantings.

Vercelli: (Peter) Mondavi, or (Charles) Krug, well they had to be pleased with your production to last thirty years. I don't know of anyone off the top of my head that has had a thirty year affiliation [in the wine business].

Fredson: You know Pete [Mondavi] came to the winery once.

Vercelli: Do you know his sons?

Fredson: Oh yeah.

Vercelli: Mark and Pete, Pete Jr. I don't know.

Fredson: Pete is still in school. He is taking some advanced course in Engineering, in computers. He has been helping Pete design the winery.

Vercelli: Yes, I have seen that in the publication.

Fredson: Mark takes care of the vineyard.

Vercelli: Yes, he is busy in the management.

Have you been over there lately?

Fredson: About a month ago.

Vercelli: I have not seen the winery completed, I was there last year.

Fredson: It is not completed yet.

Vercelli: It is not? Like the Winchester House in Santa Clara County?



- Fredson: They didn't use it last year, the new part.
- Vercelli: They did not use the new part?
- Fredson: No.
- Vercelli: He has an investment of ten million dollars in that new expansion.
- Fredson: I can see that.
- Pucilowski: That's why he took the price increases that he did last month or the month before.
- Fredson: They go back in that old rat-trap over there to make wine. You know what happened? Half of their fermenting tanks were lost. They came from St. Louis.
- Vercelli: Yes, Mueller Tank Company.
- Fredson: They had them laying on the flat car, jacked in there, loaded them on the [train] cars back there and someone didn't figure right, when they came through a tunnel they went [squish], like a stepped on beer can.
- Vercelli: That certainly wasn't publicized. That's the human interest story that I like to hear.
- Fredson: They had some wine loss over there this year in Lodi.
- Vercelli: Yes, someone vandalized the place, and they knocked off [a bung].
- Fredson: Two hundred and seventy thousand gallons.
- Vercelli: I hear that they were insured for that. With the deductible they weren't injured too much.
- Len, I'm going to repeat some of these names just so they get on the record. A little earlier we talked about John Reiners, do you know anything about John?
- Fredson: I just knew him.
- Vercelli: And his winery was?
- Fredson: His father's winery was exactly where Frank Teldeschi's house is now.
- Vercelli: And that was across the road from Plasberg's. Plasberg was on the hill, then this winery would have been on the west side of Dry Creek Road, where as Plasberg was on the east side of Dry Creek [Road].
- Fredson: They were both on the east side of Dry Creek [the creek].
- Vercelli: You told me Simrach had a winery adjacent to Plasberg's.



Fredson: It's still standing there, you can see it. It's as you go up to that fruit drying place, on the left you'll see a little concrete thing dug into the hill. That was their winery.

Vercelli: Simrach's winery.

Fredson: Yes.

Vercelli: What do you know about Al Simrach.

Fredson: We knew him, but it's so long ago Joe.

Vercelli: It's difficult for me to bring to mind, that's why I asked you that. He was a fast talker.

Fredson: We treated some wine for him. He was always over there wanting to know how to do this and that.

Vercelli: What was his business, his pursuit?

Fredson: I don't know. I know that him and his mother had that little winery.

Vercelli: But he was in business in Oakland or someplace.

Fredson: Yes.

Vercelli: Then you mentioned the Patronacks.

Fredson: That was on, what we call, West Dry Creek now.

Vercelli: Did you say that that is a good sized winery?

Fredson: Yep.

Vercelli: It was up by the [Warm Springs] dam?

Fredson: Well, in those days [there was no dam] the road ends there, where it was.

Vercelli: Oh, right at the end of the road.

Fredson: Where Heyward Petersen lives. That's the place. Pete lives in that house that Patronack built.

Vercelli: Oh, he lives in Patronack's house.

Fredson: It's a pretty house, pretty old house.

Vercelli: It was built quite some time ago.

Fredson: Oh yes.

Vercelli: Then you mentioned that Elizabeth St. Claire would be a source [of information]. She was related to whom?





Fredson: To the Patronacks.

Vercelli: Where does she live?

Fredson: She lives over by the community hall (in Alexander Valley).

Vercelli: She's married to who?

Fredson: St. Claire—

Vercelli: The fellow that retired from the county? George?

Fredson: No, Walter.

Vercelli: Then you mentioned the Hallengrens. And they had a very large operation, about 300,000 gallons of capacity. And where were they located?

Fredson: From where that bridge crosses you know to go to Skaggs [Springs Road]? Well you continue straight up that road, I would say that it about two and a half miles. It's all dam now you know.

Vercelli: Yes. The bridge is right where the fish hatchery is, goes right by the fish hatchery. And their winery was up there?

Fredson: Yes. (From earlier conversation — It was a steam winery, I can barely remember it. It had steam power. All of those at that time, steam pumps, steam crushers, because there wasn't any electricity up there. and they used wood to fire up the boilers.) And the next one up was my uncle's.

Vercelli: Holtz?

Fredson: No, Thomson.

Vercelli: Thomson was further up. Now how is Thomson related to you?

Fredson: He's from my grandmother's side, she was Israel's wife. They were my great-uncles.

Vercelli: Your great-uncles, Thomson and Holtz, and they were—

Fredson: They came here in the early [18]70's. They came from a place called Flintzberg, Schlis Holstein, Germany.

Vercelli: Your grandmother was of German extraction.

Fredson: Yes.

Vercelli: Your grandfather was Swedish.

Fredson: Yes.



- Vercelli: Did they have any grape growing experiences in Germany?
- Fredson: I don't know if they did.
- Vercelli: The reason that I asked that is my mother would often tell us that they [my mother's family] had a winery in Italy. I visited the winery in [19]74 and again in '78. My mother would often tell us how they made the wine and then when the first snows came, they would roll it out and cover them with snow. Here we have all this artificial refrigeration.
- Fredson: We did that years ago.
- Do you remember Dan Boero?
- Vercelli: Yes! With Montibello Wine Company. How in the hell did Dan Boero [get up here]?
- Fredson: He could remember when he was a kid in Italy, and they had a good sized winery. And they had these tanks outside. When the snow would come, they would pump the wine out there and let it sit all winter.
- Vercelli: To do the refrigeration. Then when the snow thawed, they would rack the wine and sell it.
- Dan Boero, I haven't heard of him in years, it is very heartwarming to talk to you Len.
- Fredson: We did a lot of business with them, I forgot to [mention it].
- Vercelli: They are a good outfit. Just as I did business with Monte Carlo, they were fine people.
- Getting back, we have the Uncle Thomson, Thomson Brothers was it?
- Fredson: Yes.
- Vercelli: And who were the two brothers? Do you remember their names?
- Fredson: Niccoli and Johann, but they called them Nick and Charlie.
- Vercelli: Johann turned into Charlie.
- And Peter Holtz comes from your grandfather's side?
- Fredson: No. He married my grandmother's sister.
- Vercelli: Oh, that's where the great-uncle comes in.
- And your grandmother's name?
- Fredson: Her name was Thomson, Sofia.
- Vercelli: Alright, that makes it kind of official, we got it for the record.



Look through an old photo album of the Fredson family.

Fredson: This is an old album, my aunt was a photographer.

Pucilowski: How old is this album?

Fredson: It starts in 1911.

There's the house, grandpa's house. [Down in Windsor] There's my grandfather and grandmother.

Vercelli: Sofia and Israel.

Fredson: Yes. There's my father and mother. Here's a picture taken from the front of the winery, right in front of the highway, that was the highway then. See the car?

Vercelli: Who's car was that?

Fredson: Jack Arata's car, I remember them talking about it, it was an Oldsmobile.

You've heard of Aratas down there? In Windsor.

Vercelli: Yes.

Fredson: Well, here's the way the road looked then.

Here's where they are putting a new roof on the winery down there.

Here they're unloading grapes in Windsor.

Here's my Uncle Pete Holtz... That's his winery. Here's his wife Caroline.... He was from the old school, you couldn't grow grapes in the valley.

Here, they're unloading grapes.

Vercelli: Your dad?

Fredson: No, that's my uncle. Here's grandpa. This here, they are unloading at the Windsor winery.

Vercelli: And they had a conveyor?

Fredson: Sure, he had everything modern.

Vercelli: And they were steam driven?

Fredson: Steam pumps, steam press, steam everything.

That is a corner of the winery, that's when they built the new highway, 1913.





- Vercelli: ....This is eucalyptus?
- Fredson: The cypress are up by the house, that's where he had his hammock.
- Vercelli: Isn't that beautiful, Mount St. Helena, in the distance.
- Fredson: Here was his garage. Here's somebody you wouldn't recognize. Harry Meyer.
- Vercelli: Yes, and when you look at it Bob Meyer bares a resemblance to him, that's Harry Meyer.
- Fredson: Bill Fergusen, Gus Brandt, this is a party they had at the house for grandpa.
- Vercelli: I saw Milt [Milton Brandt] today.
- Fredson: There's a lot of—the Engelkes.  
There's the old house on the ranch, it burnt down in 1916.
- Vercelli: Down in Windsor?
- Fredson: No, out here.
- Vercelli: Your place. Then you made the concrete structure, you put up the present house that is on the place?
- Fredson: Yes.
- Vercelli: This is Charlie [Thomson], that is part of the old winery.  
This here was a German wedding.
- Pucilowski: Were they camping out somewhere?
- Fredson: That's people from San Francisco used to come up there and camp out on Dry Creek, relatives.  
Charlie was down in San Francisco selling wine and just happened to run across this guy on the street, just after the War started in 1914-15. This guy jumped ship, he saw him walking along the street, brought him home and he stayed up here the whole time, he didn't need any part of the German army he said. His name was Otto.  
Here's some nice pictures Hilda took of the World's Fair.
- Pucilowski: Wow, 1915.
- Vercelli: She did a beautiful job.
- Fredson: She was a good photographer.



Here's the prize winner, me.

Vercelli: You were a big baby all the way through, you were a big guy, big boned. What do you weigh?

Fredson: 190-185.

Pucilowski: What are they doing here?

Fredson: They were down at Whiskey Cove fishing.

Here's my grandfather's house when it snowed one winter.

Vercelli: The first time that I've seen snow on the ground here locally in my fifty years in the community it was on the north side of the building once, but I never saw it overnight but once.

Fredson: There's one here you might be interested in Joe. Here's Charlie and there's Nick up in Dry Creek. That's Oriental School that's where the Grange Hall is now, that is the old school. See it says Oriental on it.

End of Side One

Vercelli: That is in Geyserville. I've heard of Oriental, but I didn't know it. There's a sign up there, Oriental. (Highway 128 at corner where highway turns south, junction of River Road.)

Fredson: Charlie was one of the first long hairs here around. He had hair clear down to here. He said that he had headaches if he cut his hair.

Vercelli: That's right?

Fredson: That's what he said.

This is the Windsor School.

Vercelli: Nice animals, nice horses.

Fredson: My uncle was in Mexico, he worked down there for awhile.

That's dad on the plow.

Here is an old picture of Asti [Italian Swiss Colony Winery].

Vercelli: ...That was taken up above the road, by the church area [north]. Look at the trees. That was the winery? I don't recall seeing this picture before, could it have been earlier than 1913? Is there a year on it? You say 1913?

Fredson: This is 1911.

Vercelli: What's do you have here? Sales Room...[reading from receipt] Ostrich Feather.



- Fredson: This is Los Angeles.
- Vercelli: "We sell for less, we sell the best, we clean, dye and repair feathers, furs and souvenirs."
- Fredson: Hilda had a cousin that lived down there, she used to go down and visit him all the time.
- Vercelli: This is the house again?
- Fredson: Yes. I can't find the picture of that old house, it is back here someplace.....
- This is all Brandt's. Brandt's had the brewing and bottling place, they were old friends.
- There was a gate that went into the Herta Ranch on Dry Creek. Herta, in Norse mythology, means some sort of a god. Charlie had all these fancy names for everything. He was a student, a scholar, there wasn't a thing that you could talk about that he couldn't [talk about.]
- Vercelli: Mirabelle Park, isn't that beautiful. The Bear Flag and this is in Sonoma, in 1914.
- Fredson: They had a celebration down there.
- Vercelli: There is the Court House that still stands. And this is undoubtedly on the north side of the Court House, this is Main Street.
- Fredson: This is the old Mission, it was pretty well shot then.
- Vercelli: Of course, the State renovated that.
- Fredson: I think that this [time of photo] was when they dedicated that monument.
- Vercelli: Toscano Hotel.
- Fredson: That's what it is.
- Vercelli: Jonathan Tong, the China man that was working for us at Souverain as the cook, is over there today.
- What site is this?
- Fredson: Jenner, 1914. Wasn't much to it then.
- Pucilowski: There's not much nowadays, is there?
- Fredson: See where they are fishing for smelt with nets.
- Vercelli: They were running last week, did you get them?
- Fredson: John (son) did, got a garbage can full and brought them home.





Vercelli: Oh, wonderful.

Fredson: Here's something for you, 1914 Apple Fair in Sebastopol.

Vercelli: Now I see where they had the idea of the Citrus Fair. These [floats] are covered with apples.

Fredson: You know in those days, they went in for things elaborate.

Pucilowski: A motorcycle.

Vercelli: Harley Davidson, see the name here. They had what you would call Arc lights, acetylene lamps to see the road.

Fredson: Carbide.

.....There's Soyotome School.

Vercelli: I remember that, yes, that was on the west side of the street.

Fredson: On the side Rodney Strong has.

Here they are picking hops.

Here's another one of Uncle Ed in Oakland, he was a carpenter. He married one of the older [my mother's] sisters.

Vercelli: Where is this one?

Fredson: It's up by the Geysers, hunting trips, see the horns.

Pucilowski: Look at that Christmas tree!

Fredson: That's my Aunt Hilda.

Vercelli: 1914, she was a very attractive lady.

Fredson: Her and Isabelle Simi were great friends. I think they went to business school at the same time.

Here's my mother and Hilda.

Vercelli: Where was this house?

Fredson: That's the house down in Windsor, just another angle.

There's me as a boy, here's a picture of me playing the piano.

Here's the old house down in Windsor.

Vercelli: Now this was—

Fredson: The original (house) on the ranch down there.



- Vercelli: Before the erection of the two story house.
- Fredson: Yes. It was built in the [18]70's something....
- At that time it was used to keep workers.
- Here's some of the old vineyard left up Dry Creek. See they operated at that winery until phylloxera knocked them out in about—
- Vercelli: That was Holtz?
- Fredson: Thomsons. At that time — oh, they made wonderful wine. They always got five cent premium on their wine.
- Vercelli: I see [reads] *Dry Creek Zin can't be beat*.
- Fredson: Dad said it was just like black paint.
- Vercelli: That heavy?
- Pucilowski: Even back then?
- Fredson: Yea.
- Vercelli: What was the car?
- Fredson: That was an Overland.
- Pucilowski: Look at that dog sitting up there on the hood.
- Fredson: That was grandpa's dog, I tell you where the house is now, you know where the train crosses — every morning when he would hear that 11 o'clock train come by, he would run down that road, they would throw the paper off and he would bring it home.
- Pucilowski: What was the dog's name?
- Fredson: Bum.
- Vercelli: Your folks were pretty well off to have an automobile, an Overland, in 1915.
- Fredson: Grandpa had everything pretty fast.
- Pucilowski: He was a very modern man.
- Fredson: Oh yes.
- Pucilowski: Look he has a camera.....
- Fredson: Hilda probably had three or four of them by then.
- Vercelli: Took good pictures too.



- Pucilowski: Cameras just come out? When did cameras first come out?
- Fredson: These were Kodak, the others were fritzed out, she'd have the kind with flashers and the bulbs and she processed them.
- Pucilowski: Very interesting.
- Vercelli: It was very nice of you Len.
- Fredson: I'm glad I could help you Joe.

End of interview

Personal conversation while drinking an old Port from Souverain. Leads into discussion of Bob Fredson [Len's son, was educated at Fresno State, ran the school winery for a couple of years and taught two classes], he is the winemaker at Cambiaso Winery on Grant Avenue south of Healdsburg. [Winery was purchased in the late 1980's by the Japanese and the name was changed to Domaine St. George, he remained as winemaker.]

- Vercelli: How is Cambiaso doing? Are they getting distribution?
- Fredson: They are doing good.
- Vercelli: I see a little bit more of their product.
- Fredson: Well, they bottle every week.
- Pucilowski: Private label et al, or just under their own label?
- Fredson: Most of it goes under Pelligrini, he's the salesman, he really moves wine.
- Vercelli: Yes. He's strictly a wine house, even though he has a good many outlets.
- Does Cambiaso buy his grape?
- Fredson: They make wine for him under his name.
- Vercelli: So, grown, produced and bottled by Pelligrini, that's interesting.
- What does he got? He's got pinot noir that I know of.
- Fredson: He's bought Dry Creek zinfandels, too. And I think he bought some chardonnay.
- Vercelli: He could be growing chardonnay on the premise, I know that he had a white, but I didn't know which it was.
- Fredson: Robert made a nice chardonnay off of Chalk Hill, they bought themselves, it's really nice.





- Vercelli: Then Bob Pelligrini handles the wine end of it, does he go out and buy the grape?
- Fredson: No, Robert. Robert tells him where they might be some good ones. He has charge of everything. Pelligrini's the salesman.
- Vercelli: Your Bob goes out and buys the grape for his account. That's interesting.
- Fredson: They buy a lot of grapes at Merritt Island. Do you know where that is?
- Pucilowski: Yes, I was just telling him [Joe] about Bolvo Vineyards. That's the guy I was telling you about there on Merritt Island. We were just at the winery, Monday.
- Fredson: Clarksburg. They buy chenin (blanc)—
- Pucilowski: So does Wente Brothers.
- Fredson: They crush them all in two days. They get everything ready and they pick them at night.
- Pucilowski: They get nine to ten tons to the acre.
- Vercelli: They pick it with a mechanical harvester.
- Pucilowski: They do everything at night.
- For their own vineyards, they are dropping to about four tons to the acre, for their own vineyards, they are starting that this year.
- Fredson: Bolvo told me that they were getting about seven.
- Pucilowski: Now he told me nine or ten to Wente Brothers, now maybe he's doing seven to somebody else. But he says he's been selling to Wente Brothers for years and doing nine-ten. That was Warren that told me that too.
- Fredson: This was the old man that told me that.
- Pucilowski: Warren. Chris is the son. Nice people, really down to earth, farmers, they are not into marketing or anything like that, they are really nice, nice people.
- Vercelli: Is Pelligrini doing any bottling, or is it all done up here?
- Fredson: They turned it all over, have you been to this [bottling] line down here? You ought to see it Joe. It is top grade. It is not a great big thing but—
- Vercelli: What is its capacity? About 700,000-800?
- Fredson: The winery? It's a million.



- Vercelli: Yes, they spent a lot of money. Before Joe left there, I had been up there several times and I had seen the improvements
- Fredson: The new winery is like just a palace. They still have the old winery.
- Vercelli: They had a fellow by the name of Pangborne.
- Fredson: Pangborne, he came from Asti.
- Vercelli: And I seen somewhere where he had left them, he's with Korbel, is he?
- Fredson: Yes.
- Vercelli: Did they replace him?
- Fredson: I won't say anything. He came down there as a great expert on the bottling line, how to adjust it and to fix it. He didn't know anything about it.
- Vercelli: He had no experience at it. He was basically a lab technician. They didn't replace him?
- Fredson: You know that woman that worked at Asti named Nancy, she was a chemist? She lived in Cloverdale. She left Asti and started working down here when Joe still had it here. She's a technician down there, does all the lab work. Anyway, it is her son that took his place. A kid named Shawn, he's real good too, he's young and he takes hold of things. Pangborne was one of these that thinks you couldn't tell him anything. All I ever saw was him walking around with a wrench in his pocket.
- Vercelli: I didn't know he was a mechanic. At Asti he was just a lab technician, he was about fourth man down the line. When Bob, Robert was up at Asti, he worked with Rossi in product development.
- Pucilowski: It's almost 11:00.
- Vercelli: Well, thanks ever so much. I'm indebted to you, express my regrets to Don. What is your wife's name, I'm embarrassed to call her Mrs. Fredson?
- Fredson: Jane, Justina. She has a sister that lives here in Vallejo. Her name is Genivive and Justina.

Transcription note: The audio tape is of poor quality and transcription was muddled in many places. Some remarks concerning the photos were deleted from the written transcription.



**Chris Fredson**  
**Geyserville History, Fredson Winery**  
Old Redwood Highway, Geyserville

October 31, 1973  
Interviewed by William Heintz

---

William Heintz: Can I ask you for recording purposes when you were born?

Chris Fredson: Sixth of May 91.

Heintz: That makes you 82.

Heintz: You were born in Windsor, is that right?

Fredson: Close in (to) Windsor, that's right.

Heintz: When did you move to Geyserville?

Fredson: 1911.

Heintz: You've been on this little road here since 1911?

Fredson: The same place.

Heintz: This house that we are in right now?

Fredson: No, the house burnt down, this is a new house.

Heintz: But the same spot of land?

Fredson: The same spot.

Heintz: You would have been twenty years old, what brought you here? Why did you move here?

Fredson: Oh, we just decided to move up here. This piece of land was for sale and we decided to buy it.

Heintz: Do you still own this land on this side here? The freeway has cut it all up, there's not much left.

Fredson: Well, this place was originally 101 acres, but...

Heintz: Did you buy it or did your father buy it?

Fredson: My father bought it.

Heintz: Who were some of the previous owners to Fredson? The Longs?

Fredson: We bought it from Harry Pitts. Oh, there were a lot of people... Likens,





and Longs.

Heintz: But Long was one of the owners? Do you remember the name being attached to it.

Fredson: Yeah, I think that he was.

Heintz: Right next door to you here, the next piece of property, was the Bouton's, Andrew Bouton.

Fredson: No.

Heintz: It is Wisecarver then already.

Fredson: That was Wisecarver's, but the place next to me belonged to Harry Meyer.

Heintz: This is Harry Meyer that passed away not to long ago.

Fredson: Last month.

Heintz: Then next to Meyer's was Bouton, is that it? Oh, Bouton was down the road a bit.

Fredson: Bouton was one more ranch.

Heintz: One more removed.

Do you remember anybody talking about Andrew Bouton, is the name familiar to you?

Fredson: Oh, the name is familiar, but I didn't know anything about him.

Heintz: In what way was it familiar, was he a grower?

Fredson: Just somebody talking about him that was the main thing.

Heintz: I wonder why they talked about him? Just because he lived here a long time, were there any stories told?

Fredson: I really don't know a thing about him. That's a little before my time.

Heintz: Do you remember though that he had a nursery? Heart's Desire Nursery?

Fredson: I don't know if you would call it a nursery, he had an orchard there.

Heintz: What did he grow in it?

Fredson: Cherries.

Heintz: Anything else besides cherries?

Fredson: Oh, he might have had a vineyard there at one time, I don't know.

Heintz: Were the cherries something he developed or did he just planted from



someone else?

Fredson: I don't know, he just had them that's all I know.

Heintz: Do you ever remember people saying that the cherries that they had in there place they had bought from Bouton's nursery?

Fredson: No, I don't remember.

Heintz: I understand that Bouton raised, propagated cherry trees and he sold thousands of cherry trees and fruit trees all over the country, he was quite a nurseryman.

Fredson: He might have, I don't know a thing about it.

Heintz: When you arrived here, that spot of land where the new winery is being built, down there, the new Souverain Winery is being built, what was up there, houses?

Fredson: No, that's an old vineyard in there.

Heintz: I want you to think back very clearly, and don't answer right away maybe, because I really would like to pin point this. Do you recall in 1911 when you moved up here, whether there was a vineyard there at that time on that piece of land?

Fredson: No, I don't recall it, but I am pretty sure there was. There was an old alicante vineyard there for a long, long time.

Heintz: Alicante was the name of the grape they grew?

Fredson: Yeah.

Heintz: Nothing else? Zinfandel?

Fredson: Oh, they had zinfandels...

Heintz: But mainly they had alicantes.

Fredson: You are just talking about this one spot?

Heintz: Just the spot where the winery is and all of that piece of land laying west of the freeway there (Highway 101).

Fredson: Yeah, I imagine it was all alicantes and zinfandels that was in there.

Heintz: Were there any houses in there, any buildings?

Fredson: No.

Heintz: No farms?

Fredson: No, nothing at all.



*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Oral History Series*

Heintz: Have you have any idea who might have put that vineyard in there?

Fredson: No I don't.

Heintz: Did you ever hear that Wisecarver said that he planted it?

Fredson: I think that he did.

Heintz: You knew Joseph Wisecarver then pretty well? That was the father to Emery Lloyd.

Fredson: I never knew him. I knew his dad as Newton Wisecarver.

Heintz: That's what they called him?

Fredson: That was his name.

Heintz: I thought that it was Joseph. Newton!

Fredson: Old Newt Wisecarver.

Heintz: Maybe Joseph was his brother, you know they were a large family.

Fredson: This could have been.

Heintz: And you think that he told you he planted that?

Fredson: No, he didn't tell me, but... I just think that he did.

Heintz: Did you ever hear the name McMinns? Did they live here after they sold that land to Wisecarver?

Fredson: Yes, they lived here for a long time around Healdsburg.

Heintz: Do you know whether they have all passed on or moved off?

Fredson: They have.

Heintz: There are no McMinns living now that you know of?

Fredson: No.

Heintz: Do you think that possibly the vineyard might have even gone back to the time of Bouton?

Fredson: Oh, it could have, I wouldn't say.

Heintz: Is there anyone that you could think of that might have better knowledge of how long ago the vineyard might have been there?

Fredson: No, I don't.

Heintz: I have been trying to isolate when that vineyard went in, and it is difficult to locate that exactly. But you are one hundred percent probably sure that



*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Oral History Series*

the year that you moved up here, 1911, there were vineyards over there.

Fredson: I'm pretty sure.

Heintz: And they were alicantes and maybe some zinfandel or carignane mixed in with it.

Fredson: Yes.

Heintz: Were there further vineyards down by the Wisecarver house?

Fredson: I think there was, I think that there was quite a block of vineyard in there.

Heintz: Were they the same grapes?

Fredson: It's hard to tell.

Heintz: Did Wisecarver make wine ever?

Fredson: No.

Heintz: Who did he sell to, do you have any idea?

Fredson: Oh, there were several wineries around here, I bought them a year or two.

Heintz: Did you have a winery?

Fredson: Oh, yeah.

Heintz: Oh, the winery that the freeway removed.

Fredson: Yes.

Heintz: When did that winery start up, the Fredson Winery?

Fredson: 1911.

Heintz: Did you call it by your family name, Fredson?

Fredson: Yes.

Heintz: And there had been no winery there previously? Did you buy an old building that had been a winery?

Fredson: The man that we bought it from he had a small winery there, Harry Pitts. He had a small winery, I think, mostly for his own grapes.

Heintz: And some years you bought Wisecarver's grapes.

Fredson: Yeah.

Heintz: Who else might he have sold to? Would he have sold to the California Wine Association?





*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Oral History Series*

- Fredson: That was the next place to go to, he could have.
- Heintz: Or maybe to Geyser Peak that was still going then or Johnny Rose?
- Fredson: Oh, there were several places he could have sold them, sure.
- Heintz: Was the Stammer and Feldmeyer still going then?
- Fredson: No, not since I've been here.
- Heintz: It stopped before.
- Fredson: That was before.
- Heintz: When you made wine, beginning in 1911, did you make a grey riesling or a cabernet?
- Fredson: No, we just called it red and white.
- Heintz: You had no other kind of separation, just red and white wine?
- Fredson: Oh, there was the name of the grapes sometimes — like called it a zinfandel.
- Heintz: So sometimes you made a zinfandel and sold it. If somebody came in to buy wine they might specify "I want a zinfandel."
- Fredson: We never really sold it retail that way.
- Heintz: You just sold bulk.
- Fredson: Sold bulk wine.
- Heintz: Who would you sell it to?
- Fredson: There was a lot of people in San Francisco that would buy wine then.
- Heintz: Do you remember and of the biggest ones that bought from you? Did you sell to the California Wine Association?
- Fredson: Yes, we sold to the California Wine Association.
- Heintz: How about Chiotti-Lombardi?
- Fredson: We sold to them too.
- Heintz: What would you sell to them? Would they write you a letter and say "We want to buy ten thousand gallons of red." Or would they say "We would like ten thousand gallons of zinfandel."
- Fredson: What they would do, they would come and take samples and check them and see what they wanted.
- Heintz: So you kept the wine in the barrels or tanks separated by grape variety, did



you?

Fredson: Mostly mixed up.

Heintz: What was your capacity in 1915?

Fredson: I think that we had around 150,000 (gallons).

Heintz: Okay, say a buyer from Chiotti-Lombardi comes up here and says, "I want to buy ten thousand gallons worth of wine." You had either red or white to sell them. But you didn't keep it in tanks that were zinfandel or carignane?

Fredson: They didn't used to say much about that, they checked the wine and if they liked it, they would buy it. They could call it a burgundy or whatever they wanted to call it.

Heintz: Did you reopen after Prohibition?

Fredson: Yes.

Heintz: After Prohibition they began asking for particular kinds, or was that after the World War II? When did you start separating it into zinfandel, carignane, and alicante?

Fredson: Oh, we really never did start separating it.

Heintz: But you do now over in Dry Creek, don't you?

Fredson: Yes, we have it that way now.

Heintz: But in the little winery down here you didn't worry about that too much?

Fredson: No.

Heintz: Do you remember any wineries in this neighborhood that bottled wine? In Healdsburg, Windsor, did they all do the way you did?

Fredson: Mostly it was wholesale to the others.

Heintz: Were there no wineries that put it up in bottle.

Fredson: Not in bottles, I don't think.

Heintz: Inglenook started selling it in bottles way back in 1890.

Fredson: I think around here, the nearest they come to bottles was selling it in barrels, 50 gallon barrels.

Heintz: I know Simi shipped wine like that back east.

Fredson: Yeah.

Heintz: After Prohibition, who might have been the first to put it into bottles after Prohibition?



Fredson: I wouldn't say.

Heintz: Geyser Peak, Bagnanis shipped it all to San Francisco and bottled it all there, didn't they?

Fredson: I really don't know who started bottling.

Heintz: You still don't bottle, do you, you still have a bulk winery.

Fredson: I don't bottle anything.

Heintz: The Wisecarvers, they had a lot of vineyards on their property?

Fredson: Yes, the did.

Heintz: Do you know who bought their grapes most of the time, you said that you only bought them now and then.

Fredson: They would sell to different parties.

Heintz: The California Wine Association probably up to Prohibition?

Fredson: Yeah.

Heintz: What kind of a man was Newt Wisecarver? Was he the one that was a banker or was it Lloyd?

Fredson: Lloyd was the banker. I don't know if Newt was anything but a farmer or not.

Heintz: Was he a good farmer?

Fredson: He was a pretty good man.

Heintz: Did he know his grapes? Or was he better at some other things.

Fredson: I wouldn't say. It's hard to tell.

Heintz: Was he financially stable? He didn't lose his farm, I gather, so many people lost their farms during Prohibition or after Prohibition.

Fredson: No, he never lost it, he sold it to his son Lloyd.

Heintz: If he was able to keep hold of it, what did he do? If you had vineyards during Prohibition, you shipped some east. How did you make any money during Prohibition?

Fredson: I guess his biggest income was cherries.

Heintz: What did you do during Prohibition? You didn't have cherries did you?

Fredson: No.





*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Oral History Series*

- Heintz: You couldn't sell the wine, unless you bootlegged it.
- Fredson: You could sell grapes though.
- Heintz: What kind of price did you get for your grapes?
- Fredson: Some years it was good, and some years you took red ink on the deal. That's how it was.
- Heintz: It was okay during the early years of the twenties, but the latter part of the twenties you couldn't sell grapes hardly, could you?
- Fredson: It was mostly shipped east, there were a lot of grapes being sold.
- Heintz: They would buy table grapes very readily, but would people buy these little grapes you make wine out of?
- Fredson: I think that's what they made out of all of them, wine.
- Heintz: Do you remember anything about the phylloxera? Was there any phylloxera left in this area when you came here?
- Fredson: Oh, I think that all the vineyards got killed off during the phylloxera.
- Heintz: Do you remember the years when the phylloxera was the worse up here, did anybody ever tell you?
- Fredson: No, I don't remember, that was before I came here.
- Heintz: But it wasn't very many years before you came here, was it?
- Fredson: Well, I can remember it. I imagine it was the early 1900's I guess.
- Heintz: That's what my thought is, I seem to remember reading that the early 1900's there was a lot of phylloxera up here.
- Fredson: I know that we had a nice vineyard down below Healdsburg (about 5 miles south of Healdsburg on Old Redwood Highway), hit all of it, gone.
- Heintz: What year do you remember?
- Fredson: I imagine I was six or seven years old, something like that.
- Heintz: Did your father (Israel Fredson) pull it out and plant in resistant stock, or what did he do?
- Fredson: Some. He had a winery too.
- Heintz: So there has been a Fredson Winery at Windsor before it moved up here? Your name goes back a long ways, doesn't it?
- Fredson: Oh, I'd say the 1880's or 1888, something like that.
- Heintz: Where in Windsor?



*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Oral History Series*

- Fredson: About three miles north of Windsor.
- Heintz: You think about 1888 your father started a winery, did he buy a winery from someone else? (Cypress Hill Vineyards)
- Fredson: No, he built it himself.
- Heintz: What was your father's first name?
- Fredson: Israel.
- Heintz: How big a winery was it?
- Fredson: Oh, he had over a 100,000 gallons.
- Heintz: That was very good size for that day.
- Israel Fredson winery, Windsor California (Cypress Hill). Do you remember what kind of grapes you had around your winery?
- Fredson: The same we had everywhere else. Zinfandels, mataros, carignane, and stuff like that.
- Heintz: Mataro?
- Fredson: It's almost like a carignane as a grape. I think there is still a few around here.
- Heintz: They don't plant them today though do they?
- Fredson: No.
- Heintz: He crushed grapes and made wine and still the red, white (wine) too probably. What did he do, sell it mostly in San Francisco?
- Fredson: Mostly all in San Francisco.
- Heintz: Do you remember who bought it from him in San Francisco? Collier & Frulyn?
- Fredson: We sold to them and Lachman & Jacobi.
- Heintz: Issac DeTurk ever buy any of your wine?
- Fredson: No, I don't think so.
- Heintz: You remember that name?
- Fredson: Oh, yeah. The winery in Santa Rosa.
- Heintz: A very big name.
- Fredson: Yep.



*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Oral History Series*

Heintz: In 1911, did you sell the winery down there?

Fredson: I just came up.

Heintz: And your father helped you buy some land?

Fredson: I bought it from him in 1924, I think it was.

Heintz: When did your father stop making wine down there?

Fredson: Prohibition, 1919.

Heintz: And he didn't open up after Prohibition?

Fredson: No, he got disgusted and moved to Oakland.

Heintz: The building that he made wine in is that still there?

Fredson: I don't think that it is there any more.

Heintz: Was it a wood frame building?

Fredson: Yes.

Heintz: He didn't put up a stone building?

Fredson: What he done, he dug it right into the hill.

Heintz: The site must still be there, right?

Fredson: I think so.

Heintz: Who owns the land now?

Fredson: I don't know.

Heintz: Who did he sell to, to you recall that?

Fredson: ...Nelson.

Heintz: Do you remember a first name by chance?

Fredson: I know the boys, Amry Nelson one of the boys.

Heintz: This is three miles north of Windsor, are there some hills there?

Fredson: Yes, there is a hill there.

Heintz: I can't quite see that in my mind where that might have been.

I wonder whether the Nelson still own that or...

Fredson: No, they sold that a long time ago, I don't know who's got it now.



*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Oral History Series*

- Heintz: The winery you had up here just next to the house here, was that wood too?
- Fredson: It was wood.
- Heintz: Was it redwood? And you constructed it yourself?
- Fredson: Yeah.
- Heintz: Do you have photos of it, the old winery?
- Fredson: I suppose if I looked around I could find them.
- Heintz: Do you have photographs of the old winery in Windsor?
- Fredson: No.
- Heintz: There were none ever taken that you recall? Maybe in your father's effects?
- Fredson: No, I don't think so.
- Heintz: That's too bad, that's history that's gone.
- Fredson: That's trouble. You never think of doing it in those days.
- Heintz: I'm going to go back to the phylloxera for a minute, as a boy you remember your father pulling out his vines and you were born in 1891, so about 1885, 86, 87?
- Fredson: Somewhere in there I think.
- Heintz: He was pulling them out and he had to plant them with resistant roots, resistant vines. Did he plant the same kind of grapes as before or did he plant different grapes?
- Fredson: Really the same.
- Heintz: He used resistant rootstock and but put on the same old kind of vines on the rootstock?
- Fredson: That's right.
- Heintz: Because the alicantes weren't resistant or the mataros...
- Fredson: None of them was resistant in those days.
- Heintz: So he planted the same kind of grapes.
- Fredson: All except alicantes, nobody had much use for them.
- Heintz: Why not?





*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Oral History Series*

Fredson: Well, they was just red grape and they was suppose to be a good grape, but they don't hold the color, they fade.

Heintz: Well, if there were some alicantes up here still on this piece of property where the new (Souverain) winery is being built, people wouldn't have planted alicantes in the last thirty or forty or fifty years, would they?

Fredson: Some of them do, you can't tell.

Heintz: I was trying to date that vineyard. Because if you said that around 1900 they had to replant, if the alicante was a poorer grape maybe they wouldn't have replanted that, and those might date back before.

Fredson: Well, some people thought that alicante is alright. (Chuckles) That's just the way it is.

Heintz: If there were vineyards here in 1900 or 1895, certainly the grapes there wouldn't date, wouldn't be older than that because the phylloxera would have taken them out. Wouldn't it?

Fredson: Yeah. That's just the kind of ground the phylloxera works on the best.

Heintz: Where the ground is a little weak? Gravelly, not much nutrient in it?

Fredson: The hill vineyards they all died out first.

Heintz: The hill vineyards, that's very interesting, I wonder why?

Fredson: Well, I imagine they just didn't have the moisture and they just couldn't keep going. You know all phylloxera is is a little bug that eats the roots off.

Heintz: And each year if it can put out new roots, if there was plenty of moisture it would survive. I don't know too much about the phylloxera, does the phylloxera eat the root, it consumes the root? And that is how it kills the vine.

Fredson: Yeah.

End of interview, they discuss I. DeTurk's 1893 Viticultural Report and possibility of Fredson Windsor winery being in it.



## Index Leonard Fredson

- Alexander Valley 3, 6
- Alicante grapes 7
- Arakalian 14
- Arata, Jack 20
- Asti (Italian Swiss Colony) 7, 10, 11, 13, 22, 28
- Belli, Stacy 10, 12
- Boero, Dan 19
- Bolvo 27
  - Warren 27
  - Chris 27
- Bottling 10, 14, 27, 28
- Brandt Brewing 23
- Cambiaso Winery 26
- Chalk Hill, 26
- Clarksburg 27
- Cypress Hill Vineyards 3
- DeGeorge, Frank 7
- Dry Creek 3, 16, 22, 25
- Ellis, John 12
- Fredson Family
  - Caroline 20
  - Charles (Jack) 2, 3
  - Christian (Chris) 2, 5, 7, 14, 27
  - Donald 1, 28
  - Hilda 2, 3, 21, 23, 24, 25
  - Israel 2, 5, 6, 20
  - Sofia 20
- Frei Brothers Winery 8, 9, 14
- Furber, Bill (Winery) 9
- Gallo (Winery) 8, 14
- Germany 18
- Geyserville 5, 22
- Geyserville Growers 9
- Grape 3, 7, 13, 19, 20
  - Carignane 7
  - Chenin blanc 27
  - Colombard 15
  - Grenache 7
  - Golden chasselas 15
  - Juice 7
  - Petite sirah 7
  - Pinot noir 26
  - Mataro 7
  - Riesling 3
  - Sauvignon Vert 15
- Guidotti, Nin 12
- Gundlach-Bundschu 6, 7
- Hallengren Winery 18
- Hammond Lumber Co. 11
- Healdsburg 1
- Healdsburg Wine Co. 10
- Holtz 19, 20
  - Peter 19, 20
  - Caroline 20
- Holtz Winery 13
- Korbel Winery 28
- Krug Winery 14
- Lanceburger 6, 7
- LeBaron, Gaye 12
- Mazzoni, Bill 12
- Merchants, Commission 6
  - Gundlach-Bundschu 6, 7
  - Lanceburger 6, 7
- Meyer 9, 10, 21
  - Robert (Bob) 10, 20
  - Harry 10, 20
- Modesto 8
- Mondavi (Charles Krug) 15
  - Mark 15
  - Peter 15
  - Pete Jr. 15
- Montibello Wine Company 19
- Mueller Tank Company 16
- Nelson Brothers 4
- New Jersey 9
- Northern Sonoma 8, 9, 10, 14
- Oriental School 22
- Pacific Tank 11
- Patronack Winery 17
- Pelligrini, Bob 26, 27
- Petersen, Heyward 8, 17
- Petri 8, 10, 14
- Phylloxera 25
- Pitts
  - Harry 5, 6
  - George 6
- Pitts Winery 5, 6
- Plasberg Winery 16
- Pomace 12
- Prati, Enrico 13
- Prohibition 7, 12, 13
- Prorate 9
- Prune Association 11
- Puncheons 7
- Reiners Winery 16
- Renault and Company 9
- Repeal of Prohibition 7, 12
- Rhinefarm 7
- Rose, Harvey 10
- Rosenberg Fruit Processors 10
- San Francisco 1, 7, 21
- Scatena Winery 12
- Sierra Buttes Mine 4
- Sierra County 3, 4
- Simi, Isabelle 24



Simi Winery 13	Montibello Wine Company 19
Simrach, Al 17	Northern Sonoma 8, 9, 10, 14
Simrach Winery 16, 17	Reiners 16
Sink, Walter 9, 14	Rhinefarm 7
Smith, Albert 7, 8	Scatena
Sonoma County 3, 7	Simi 13
Sonoma (Town) 23	Simrach 16, 17
St. Claire 18	Sink 9, 14
Elizabeth 18	Steam 18
George 18	Thomson Brothers 18, 25
Sweden 1	Wente Brothers 27
Tanks 11, 12, 14, 19	Wisecarver 6
Fermenting 16	Zinfandel 3, 7, 15
Hammond Lumber 11	
Pacific 11	
Mueller 16	
Windler 11	
Tarpy, Paul 14	
Thomson Brothers 18, 25	
Johann (Charlie) 19, 21, 22, 23	
Niccoli (Nick) 19, 22	
Sofia 19	
Tong, Jonathan 23	
Vineyard 3, 25, 27	
Wente Brothers 27	
Windler 11	
Windsor 1, 2, 3, 5, 24	
Windsor School 22	
Windsor winery 20	
Wine 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 25, 26	
Burgundy 15	
Chablis 15	
Chardonnay 26	
Dry 13	
Grappa 12	
Red 7	
Sweet 13	
White 3	
Zinfandel 26	
Winemaker 9, 13	
Winery 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 15, 16, 20, 22, 25, 28	
Asti (ISC) 7, 10, 11, 13, 22, 28	
Cambiaso 26	
Charles Krug 15	
Frei 8, 9, 14	
Furber 9	
Gallo 8, 14	
Hallengren 18	
Healdsburg Wine Co. 10	
Holtz Winery 13	
Plasberg 16	
Petri 8, 10, 14	
Pitts Winery 5, 6	





## Index Chris Fredson

Bagnani family, Geyser Peak 35, 37  
Bottle 36  
Bouton, Andrew 31  
California Wine Association 34, 35, 37  
Chiotti-Lombardi 35, 36  
Collier & Frulyn 39  
Dry Creek 36  
Fredson  
    Israel 39  
Fredson Winery 34  
Geyser Peak 35, 37  
Geyserville 30  
Grape 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41  
    Alicante 32, 34, 36, 41  
    Carignane 34, 36, 39  
    Grey riesling 35  
    Mataro 39, 41  
    Zinfandel 32, 34, 35, 36, 39  
Healdsburg 38  
Heart's Desire Nursery 31  
Lachman & Jacobi 39  
Likens family 31  
Lloyd family 37  
Longs family 31  
McMinns family 33  
Meyer, Harry 31  
Nelson family 40  
    Amry 40  
Wisecarver, Newton 33, 37  
Phylloxera 38, 41, 42  
Pitts, Harry (Winery) 31, 34  
Prohibition 36, 37, 40  
Resistant rootstock 41  
San Francisco 35, 39  
Simi Winery 36  
Souverain Winery 32  
Stammer and Feldmeyer 35  
Vineyard 32, 33, 34, 37, 42  
Windsor 30, 39, 40, 41  
Wine 34, 36, 38, 39, 40  
    Burgundy 36  
    Cabernet 35  
Winery 32, 36, 38, 39, 41  
    California Wine Association 34,  
    35, 37  
    Chiotti-Lombardi 35, 36  
    Pitts 31, 34  
    Simi 36  
    Souverain 32  
    Stammer and Feldmeyer 35  
Wisecarver family 31, 33, 34, 37



*Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County Publications*  
P.O. Box 43, Healdsburg, California 95448

**Sonoma County Wine Library**  
139 Piper Street, Corner of Center & Piper Street, Healdsburg, Ca  
All Rights Reserved, Copyright © 1996.











